

TOBACCO.  
A FARMER'S CROP



BY

PHILIP MEADOWS TAYLOR

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# TOBACCO:

## A FARMER'S CROP.

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*1886 -*

BY  
PHILIP MEADOWS TAYLOR.

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# TOBACCO :

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTION OF TOBACCO INTO EUROPE—ITS VICISSITUDES, AND ULTIMATE SUCCESS.

I AM far from supposing that the following brief description of the culture and treatment of the tobacco plant in France can be of any immediate use to the English reader or farmer. But as I have lived for some fifty years in Southern France, and have, during that period, collected a mass of documents and information on the subject, I am tempted to put my small budget of knowledge into a somewhat readable shape, so that if ever the present laws regulating the tobacco trade in England are changed, reformed, or modified, some

information respecting the culture of the plant in France and the organisation of the French *Régie* or tobacco monopoly, may be available.

I was induced to put my hand to the work on learning from the public press that the question has been brought forward in Kent by Mr. Faunce de Laune, of Sharsted Court, and that the Kentish farmers are stated to have warmly taken up the idea. I have also read with great interest a very remarkable paper on the subject of tobacco culture in England, published in the *Morning Post* of January 25, 1886.

I frankly own that I have only a very remote idea that any change in the existing laws is likely to be obtained. A most competent English authority has assured me that no minister could be found who would venture to propose such an innovation.

Still, I have lived to see many things come to pass in England that in my boyhood were scouted as Utopian and as wild phantasies of the political and scientific brain. Nothing can now be deemed impossible. Statesmen who started on their political career under the Tory banner we have seen leading the Radical ranks and exchanging greetings with Irish repealers.

It may thus come to pass that some ultra-reforming minister in search of a platform will cast his eye on tobacco. I own that I look with

considerable fear and distrust upon the craving desire for change and so-called reform that rides so prominently on the crest of the democratic wave now sweeping through old Europe. I earnestly hope that my Anglo-Saxon countrymen will look well to the foundations of the new edifice offered them, before they allow the old traditional structure of our forefathers to be ruthlessly pulled down about their ears.

A long sojourn in a land where, every twenty years, a form of government has been swept away, and which has now drifted into a so-called democratic republic, has taught me the virtue of caution.

Real democratic rule and a really republican form of government cannot exist in a country poisoned to its heart's core by the liberticide emanating from that fell upas-tree called Centralisation. It is certainly worthy of note that whatever may be the new form of government that suddenly springs up from between the paving stones of Paris, no one ever dreams of cutting away, or of lopping the branches of the pernicious system of centralisation that has destroyed all true liberty in France. The very word has ceased to be understood. Again, a real *bonâ fide* republic cannot exist in security yoked to a large permanent army.

Finally, the result of these changes in the

form of government is to be found in a total collapse of all individual independence and a most wasteful augmentation of the public expenditure.

From the year 1830 to 1840 the French Budget was about 60 millions; now in 1886 we may surmise that it reaches 160 millions. Even the second empire, with its consummate corruption, barely figured up to 90 millions. So much for democratic financing!

But it is high time that I should revert to the real subject of these pages, namely, Tobacco.

In looking over the notes which I have taken from various sources, respecting the introduction of tobacco into Europe, I find strange discrepancies. It appears certain, according to the eminent American historian, Prescott, that Fernando Cortez observed it in 1519, when he invaded Mexico.<sup>1</sup> It seems to have been well known and used by the Aztecs under the name of *Yetl*. It was principally cultivated in the province of Tabasco, a part of Yucatan, then a fief of Mexico. Hence probably the name of *Tobacco*, which the Spanish conquerors gave it, and when they transplanted it into Hispaniola and the other Caribbean Islands, Tabago or Tobago seems to have been

<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards first became acquainted with tobacco when they landed in Cuba in 1492. The first description of the plant was given by Oviedo in his *Historia General de las Indias*, printed at Seville in 1535.



most favoured. Some authors suppose that the plant took its name from this island.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that the use or abuse of the tobacco leaf was well known to the Aztecs. The unfortunate monarch Montezuma, in the halcyon days of his magnificent and luxuriously indolent life, was daily wont, after his dinner, to enjoy the soothing luxury of propelling a cloud from the golden stem of a bejewelled pipe, whilst near to his royal hand stood a golden flagon of the exhilarating *Pulque*; and before him minstrels, mountebanks, and dancing-girls amused the Aztec monarch with their "quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles," till he sank into his afternoon repose.

Verily, we Anglo-Saxons have his counterpart in our worthy King Cole, of whom it is sung—

"Old King Cole was a jolly old soul,  
And a jolly old soul was he;  
When he called for his pipe and he called for his bowl,  
And called for his fiddlers three."

(Not having the poem near me I quote from memory.)

Europe owes to the invaders of Mexico many other boons or luxuries. In the year 1519 Cortez

<sup>1</sup> Oviedo says that *tabaco* was the term, in the Haytian language, to designate the pipe used in smoking the herb. The word was transferred, by the Spaniards, from the pipe to the plant itself.

sent to his imperial master, the great Emperor Charles V., a tribute, the principal merit of which was doubtless, in those days, the presence of the precious metals and stones, but which also contained samples of the leaf and seed of the "*Yetl*" or *tobacco*, and of the nuts of the cacao, from which the Aztecs brewed their favourite condiment, which they called *chocolatl*.

These Aztecs appear to have been consummate artists in the mystery of chocolate making. This one gleans from the old chronicles of those days.

To these were added samples of the golden maize, that appears to have grown in wild luxuriance, and was cultivated from the Mexican Gulf to the St. Lawrence, wheat being unknown. There were likewise the cochineal insect and the fragrant vanilla.

Lastly we will mention that lordly bird—the well-known turkey. This truly American bird was first introduced into Europe from Mexico. The Spaniards styled it the *Gallo-pavo*. On their arrival in the land of the now lost race of Aztecs they found immense flocks of this splendid bird, not only in the wild state, but domesticated. It was the only barnyard fowl known.

The tradition that the turkey originally came to Western Europe from the East is quite erroneous.

I may add, before quitting the Aztecs, that they were likewise snuff-takers.

It appears most probable that the growth of tobacco and its use was early known over nearly all the American continent. The North American Indians called it *Yoli* or *Petun*. The calumet, or pipe of peace, seems to have been a most venerable institution, and its origin must be found in the presence of tobacco.

For further information I must refer my readers to the chronicles of Father Sahagun, of Bernal Diaz, Gomara, the good kind Las Casas, Torquemada, and many others.

The youthful captain, the future admiral Francis Drake, is said to have been the introducer of tobacco into England in 1586.<sup>1</sup>

But it seems more probable that the Flemings, always remarkable for their commercial enterprise, and who formed the court and were the advisers of the young Emperor Charles V. when he received the conquering Cortez' first tribute from Mexico in 1519 or 1520, were the real distributors of tobacco throughout Europe. The botanist Loben, who flourished towards 1580, was also a Fleming, though erroneously supposed by some writers to have been of English birth. That he lived many years in England is probable; and from him we learn that not only was tobacco cultivated in

<sup>1</sup> Introduced by the settlers in Virginia who were brought back by Drake in 1586. Harriott, who was one of these settlers, described the tobacco plant and its use in his account of Virginia (*Hakluyt I.* 75).

England before 1570, but that through the medium of the Emperor Charles's Spanish and Flemish subjects it had previously been made known in Italy, Austria, and Hungary, and that it had soon found its way into Venice. The early cultivation of the plant in and around Salonica, then under Turkish domination, is most probable. It is generally supposed that the Turks were smokers at even an earlier date, for it is difficult even now to present to one's mind a real Turk without his pipe.

*are)* To Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh is, however, due the introduction of tobacco into Great Britain. To Sir Walter especially is assigned the glory of having been the first smoker on British shores. Every one has heard the current story of this courtier mariner, having settled himself down for a quiet pipe, being found with smoke issuing from his mouth by an uninitiated domestic, who, thinking his master in flames, dashed a bucket of water over the gallant hero.

Tobacco had to encounter hard times in the following years. James I. waged war against it, whilst his canny Scotch countrymen became renowned for their snuffs. In the seventeenth century tobacco-smoking became most prevalent, nay, I may say universal, in all English taverns and places where wits, writers, and philosophers did mostly congregate. All enjoyed their pipe.



No doubt the pure white clay of Purbeck fashioned into the long-stemmed pipe was one inducement to free smoking. Cigars, or segars, were apparently not in use, for Dr. Johnson in his dictionary makes no mention of either of the words.

Gentlemen did not then carry their pipes in their pockets.

The philosophical Locke has somewhere in his writings this strange observation :—

“Bread and tobacco may be neglected ; but reason first recommends their trial, and custom makes them pleasant.”

From Dean Swift we may take the following brief quotation :—

“ His ancient pipe in sable dyed,  
And half unsmoked lay by his side.”

Sir Isaac Newton was a faithful adherent to the weed. It is said that when he went to pay his matrimonial addresses to some fair lady he unconsciously addressed himself to the lady's little finger, using it for a pipe-rammer.

The advent of William of Nassau at the head of his Dutch regiments and councillors must have stimulated the growth of this habit. For Holland was then, and is now, the land of smokers. A Dutchman is never without his pipe.

The great Erasmus is said to have made a hole in the rim of his broad beaver hat through which he thrust his pipe, thus to write and smoke

simultaneously. The celebrated friend of our Sir Thomas More must have been one of the earliest votaries of the pipe, since he died in 1536. It may be supposed, however, that when his imperial master, Charles V., made him one of his privy councillors, his majesty graciously coupled with the honour and pension, a portion of the tobacco he had received in 1519 from Cortez. All this goes to prove that Holland was in advance of all Europe in tobacco-smoking.

It was through Flemish merchants that tobacco found its way into France.

In 1560, Messire John Nicot, then ambassador from France to the court of Lisbon, obtained some seed of the precious plant from a Dutch merchant. The ambassador presented his acquisition to his royal mistress, Catherine de Medicis, and under her patronage it was cultivated in the royal demesnes (I may add that Messire Nicot was also the first compiler of a dictionary of the French language): it then took the name of *Herbe de la Reine*, or Queen's herb, and later that of Prior's herb, from a prelate of the famous family of Guise. Linnæus, and other botanists, have sent Nicot's name down to posterity; and if research is made for vulgar tobacco in scientific works, the student must turn to the word "Nicotiana," certainly a more mellifluous term; though the propriety of thus attributing the introduction of tobacco to

Messire Nicot is open to doubt: a somewhat parallel case to that of Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci.

If smoking was more prevalent in England, snuffing found greater favour in France. Fops and Marquises were trained in the graceful use of the snuff-box. The wave of the hand to brush the scattered grains from the shirt-frill was a studied accomplishment. It is certain that in England something of the same kind took place. In "The Rape of the Lock" mention is made by Pope of a certain Sir Plume "of amber snuff-box vain."

When snuff-taking disappeared, as it has done in France during the present century, snuff-boxes must have followed in its train.

For a time this void must have been a puzzling inconvenience to crowned heads and potentates who were accustomed to honour merit or requite services with golden, gem-set boxes, often surmounted by the features of the princely donor. Gold snuff-boxes were most promiscuously bestowed during royal and imperial progresses — a large provision being laid in when royalty visited royalty. Smoking and pipes having driven out snuff and its boxes, we cannot contemplate the box being replaced by a distribution of pipes, however costly; even Montezuma's gorgeous inhaler would not be correct.

The conquest of Algeria, the revolution of 1830 and its National Guard with its guardrooms, where paterfamilias could smoke in peace, the appearance of the unfortunate Polish exiles, all smokers, added vastly to the growing legion of French smokers; and the advance still continues, to the joy and profit of the French treasury, more and more in quest and want of resources.

In the sixteenth century the weed had its fervent adherents, but it had also its bitter antagonists. In France, King Louis the XIV., called the Great, by his royal ordinance of 1681 forbids, under the severest penalties, all smoking on board seagoing craft. In 1698, the famous Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, by his synodal decree, sternly interdicted all use of the snuff-box and all taking of snuff to chaplains or priests whilst fulfilling their sacred functions in church.

About the year 1640 Pope Urban VIII. published his bull excommunicating all persons taking snuff in any sacred edifice. About the same time the Sultan Amurath IV. interdicted the use of tobacco in his dominions, and Abbas II. the then reigning Shah of Persia, followed in the wake of the Ottoman potentate.

The first Romanoff, Michael III., Grand Duke of Muscovy or Czar of Russia, also placed his interdict on the use of tobacco.

In England our own strange-minded monarch,



James I., gave vent to his aversion to smoking by publishing his well-known treatise entitled, "A Counter Blast to Tobacco."

Things have changed since those times, and when I was last in England, after many a long year's use of the not very palatable French "caporal," I inhaled with delight Mr. Benson's "Prince of Wales Mixture."

L Molière, of French renown, in 1665, took up the cudgels in defence of tobacco, and in his comedy of "Le Festin de Pierre," he puts the following eulogium on the excommunicated weed:

"Sganarelle.—Yes, in spite of Aristotle and the philosophers, nothing can be compared to tobacco! It is the passion of all honest folks. A man who lives without tobacco is not worthy of life. Not only does it cleanse and enliven the human brain, but it inspires sentiments of virtue, and with its use one learns to become honest and worthy."

This evidently was addressed to snuff-takers, but what Aristotle had to do with the question must remain a mystery.

I have found many most impertinent remarks in certain French writers of the 18th century, on certain ladies' snuffy noses; but I shall not quote them. Boileau is foremost in the gang.

I must confess that I am taking a roundabout

way to reach the true goal I have in view, which is to describe practical tobacco culture in France, yet now that I have ventured to lead my readers by this gossiping route, I must find room for one more anecdote that has just flashed across my mind.

In 1848 I was at Rome. It was a few days before the popular or revolutionary outbreak that forced Pio Nono to seek refuge in Gaeta. Rome was quite deserted by travellers; the slumbering storm had given dread tokens of its approach. I was there with no political purpose, merely recruiting strength after a sore illness brought on by street-fighting in the days of June 1848 at Marseilles. One morning I had wandered with my cicerone to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Francesco, the said cicerone, was a relation or crony of some official belonging to the church, and from him he learned that his Holiness was expected to come that morning to pay his devotions before the celebrated shrine of the Virgin in the Borghese Chapel. Tradition attributes the picture of the Virgin surmounting the altar to St. Luke.

Francesco managed, through his friend, that I should be allowed to put myself in a corner of the chapel, entrance being prohibited to the general public. The only other occupants were two

Carmelite nuns from the Syrian convent of Mont Carmel. A few minutes afterwards the holy Father entered the basilica, and preceded by two of the *guardie nobili*, came into the chapel. At once all the assistants sank upon their knees. I was intensely struck by the benign sweet expression of the Pope's sculptural features, and by the solemn dignity of his carriage, as draped in his ample white dalmatic robe he slowly advanced towards the altar. There he knelt, and appeared wrapt in deep and earnest prayer. The whole scene sent a deep thrill through me. The magnificent chapel, the bent figure of him whom so many millions look up to as their revered head and guide, the prostrate forms of those two poor sisters from the lonely Syrian mount, the splendid tombs of the popes, the bright rays of the morning sun as they darted through the rich colours of the huge casements, and add to all this the deep hush that reigned through the vast aisles, now densely thronged, made a scene that I have never forgotten. While I gazed, I own in deep reverence, I noticed the holy Father's hand slowly finding its way into the deep recesses of his ample robe. Equally slowly I saw a portly, though rather common-looking boxwood snuff-box appear. Then followed the well-known sound of the small smart rap on its lid; the lid was raised, the eager finger sought the desired pinch. But what a

deception lurked in the faithless box, it was empty!

With one glance Pio Nono measured the extent of his privation. The lid snapped down, and with a passing look of annoyance he restored the box to its resting-place.

This anecdote seems to prove that the papal bull of Pope Urban VIII. and the edict of the Gallican Bishop Bossuet have fallen into neglect.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE RÉGIE NATIONALE DES TABACS IN FRANCE.

LET us now “leave all meaner things” and return to Tonneins, to set to work on the study of the cultivation of tobacco.

Before entering into the agricultural part of the business we must take a cursory view of the fiscal systems which the Governments of Great Britain and France have adopted for levying the duties raised on tobacco.

The two systems, though quite dissimilar, arrive at the same result, namely, to take heavy sums out of the smoker’s pocket.

In Great Britain the Government levies its tax on all tobacco in leaf or manufactured as it enters the kingdom. The importer, when he takes his merchandise out of the Custom’s bonding warehouse, must pay the duty of 3*s.* 6*d.* a pound (in 1879 the duty was raised from 3*s.* 2*d.* to the present figure). This paid, the leaf is made over to the manufacturer, to the wholesale merchant,

or to the tobacconists, these last being at liberty to sell it to the public at the price they consider most beneficial to their interests. I do not know if the Government have retained any power in their hands as to regulating prices or supervising the quality of the article sold to their smoking subjects.

I have looked through the lengthy tobacco laws passed under the reign of King George III.<sup>1</sup> The whole series of laws and regulations so bristle with fines that one feels perfectly astonished that any mercantile man can have had anything to do with tobacco. It is not in my power in this remote valley of the Pyrenees to search out what changes have been made since King George's Draconian edict came forth; but I suppose that many changes must have taken place, or that part of the most stringent of the regulations have fallen into desuetude.

One thing stands out most prominently, which is, that no tobacco is allowed to be grown or cultivated in Great Britain.

It appears, however, that even at the beginning of the present century the plant was cultivated in Ireland, and even in Scotland. I should be curious

<sup>1</sup> The cultivation of tobacco in England was first prohibited by the Commonwealth in 1652; and this Act was confirmed at the Restoration (12 *Car. II.*, c. 34; and 15 *Car. II.*, c. 7).

to learn how the duty was then levied upon the crops.

In the British Isles smokers are mulcted annually to the tune of about eight millions and a half pounds sterling. I have no information as to the weight or quantity annually imported. I have come across some strange calculations as to the quantity each individual Briton puffs or snuffs away annually, but as these useless calculations are based on the total population and not upon the number of real *bonâ fide* smokers, they are unworthy of attention.

Monsieur De Necker was addicted to this childish amusement.

Adam Smith says in his *Wealth of Nations*, "Tobacco might be cultivated with advantage through the greater part of Europe, but in almost every part of Europe it has become a principal subject of taxation, and to collect a tax from every different farm in the country where this plant might happen to be cultivated would be more difficult, it has been supposed, than to levy one upon its importation at the Custom House. The cultivation of tobacco has upon this account been most absurdly prohibited through the greater part of Europe, which necessarily gives a sort of monopoly to the countries where it is allowed" (Book I. chap. xi.).

The Governments that have ruled the destinies

of France during the last hundred years have adopted quite a different system. The State is the sole importer, purchaser, manufacturer, and seller of tobacco in its different shapes and forms. The Government levies the duty direct from the consumer.

This enormous administration is called the Régie des Tabacs. It has been the Régie Royale, then Imperiale, and now is termed Nationale. Before the Régie was organised by the first Napoleon other systems had been tried.

In 1674 the right of selling tobacco was first farmed out to John Breton for a term of six years. For the first two years he was bound to make an annual payment into the State coffers of £20,000; this being raised to £28,000 for the four subsequent years. Our James the First's system of patent extortions was then in vogue in France. At the expiration of John Breton's six-year patent his place was taken by the French Indian Company, who undertook to pay yearly a royalty of £60,000. This rose in 1771 to £828,000, and in 1789 it reached the then large figure of £1,280,000. From this eventful date in French history to the Republican year VII., which being translated means 1798, the import, culture, manufacture, and sale of tobacco was declared free from all taxation and restraint. I suppose it was one of the un-

fathomable "principes des droits de l'homme" called immortal, that every man has a right to smoke, sneeze, and chew, free of fetters and taxation.

Nevertheless, in this year of 1798, Ramel, then Minister of Finance under the Directory, finding his exchequer very low, and much troubled how to discover means to replenish it, bethought himself of tobacco. Its taxation was reorganised, but up to the year 1811 it barely produced £600,000 per annum.

In 1811 the Emperor Napoleon found time to turn his attention to tobacco, and under his direction that most remarkable system called the "Régie des Tabacs" was organised.

This vast administration forms part of what is called *Les Contributions Indirectes*. This section of the French exchequer comprehends the customs, post-office, stamp-office, and in fact all taxes levied on articles of consumption.

The *Contributions Directes* are our well-known assessed taxes.

French rulers are the most polite of all satraps. A Frenchman is not taxed. The word is odious, painful. No, sir, a French citizen is not taxed; he *contributes* to the expenses of *la Grande Nation*. However, his contribution is far from being voluntary, and of late years, in spite of all efforts, "*pour dorer la pilule*," the pill



becomes yearly, nay hourly, more difficult to swallow.<sup>1</sup>

I believe that I may fairly state that the administrative mechanism of the Régie is remarkably good.

This vast administration is the sole purchaser and importer of all the required foreign leaf or high-class brands of cigars. By special contract, or by tender, all these purchases are made through well-chosen mercantile firms or by the consular agents. The purchases on their arrival in France

<sup>1</sup> The origin of the term *Contributions Indirectes* dates from the Restoration in 1815. These taxes, known under the name of the *Droits réunis*, or United Taxes, were then most unpopular in France. The Empire had levied them with a heavy hand. The royal Bourbons, on their return to France, promised that the hated name should disappear. They kept their promise, but they also kept the taxes. Frenchmen learnt that they were no longer to pay their moneys to the obnoxious "Droits réunis," but to contribute their mite to a more amiable institution styled "Les Contributions *Indirectes*," and every one was satisfied.

This strange and rather improper juggling with words has not, it appears, fallen with Empires and Monarchies into desuetude. The present men who are supposed to govern France, in spite of their repeated asseverations that their proposed Budget for 1887 would exhibit what is termed a state of equilibrium, and having declared with trumpet-clang, that on no account would a fresh loan be issued, now (if we may believe the newspapers), finding themselves in dire distress, resort to the time-honoured system of juggling, and propose, not to issue a loan, O no, but simply they will make an emission of three per cent. rentes to the tune of some sixty millions of pounds sterling; thus obtaining the equilibrium by burdening future generations with a new annual load of some fifty millions of francs. It is curious to observe that such a thrifty population as the French are known to be should so often have such spendthrift rulers.

can be delivered in only certain specified seaports where the administration has its agents and its special warehouses. As to how the home-grown tobacco is looked after and purchased, the detail will be found further on, when home culture will be entered into.

For the carriage and transport of all its goods—raw or manufactured—the administration has its special tariffs with all the railway companies.

The Régie has nineteen manufactories spread over France, all on an enormous scale, and replete with laboratories and with the most improved machinery for Scarferlati cutting, and all other operations. Attached to these are thirty central warehouses. The directors are called *Ingénieurs Chimistes*, or chemical engineers. They are taken from the well-known polytechnic school, and are specially educated for their profession. These directors are surrounded by well-trained staffs; and the process of manufacturing proceeds on regular and scientific principles. The Régie has adopted certain staple qualities of smoking and other forms of tobacco, and they remain immutable. In fact this administration has formed the French taste, according to its peculiar ideas and interests, and no one thinks of putting in doubt the excellence of “caporal,” the universal and sole pipe-tobacco made use of in France.

This and a rather inferior article, manufactured specially for the army, navy, gendarmerie, government hospitals and lunatic asylums, and called Tabac de Cantine, form the great bulk of manufacture. The cantine tobacco is sold at a very reduced price to those for whom it is produced, none being allowed to be sold to the general public.

Large quantities of halfpenny cigars are likewise turned out, and a less number of penny ones—certain superior-class cigars are also manufactured from foreign leaf. This part of the work is principally done in the Paris manufactories. The high-priced cigars are all imported ready made. The manufactory at Marseilles, is principally occupied with cigarette-making, of which there is a host of denominations, and the sale appears to be extending, though sturdy old paper-smokers still prefer to roll up their slip of paper with their own moist fingers.

Paris alone has three large manufactories—at the Gros Caillon, Remilly, and Pantin.

All the manufactories are at the same time central warehouses.

It is from these central stores that the *Entrepouseurs* or middlemen draw their supplies. These agents are most trustworthy officials, usually veterans from the *employés* of the Contributions Indirectes;—and the position is a lucrative one.



It is well known that this country is divided into departments, and each of these departments is subdivided into three, four, or five arrondissements, each arrondissement having its "chef-lieu" or chief town—in each of these chief towns you find an "entreposeur" in charge of a well-fitted-up storehouse. The entreposeur is bound to keep a sufficient stock of all kinds of tobacco, so as to be at once able to meet the demands of the retail tobacconists, *Bureaux de Tabac*.

The entreposeur applies directly to the manufactories for his supplies. Paris sends him his foreign cigars, Tonneins his "caporal," Marseilles his cigarettes. To avoid any hitch in the sale, the entrepôts must always hold a three months stock. All complaints as to quality, fabrication, or other things, that come to the ears of the agent, must be at once reported to head-quarters. The entreposeurs are warned not to ask for too large quantities at a time of cigarettes and prime cigars, as they may lose flavour by too long keeping. The Régie appears to do everything in its power to satisfy its customers.

The entreposeurs receive a fixed annual stipend. In the provinces this is fixed at about £200 a year ; in Paris and in the large cities the figure allowed is much larger.

The last and most numerous grade, in this vast administration, is the retail sellers, also

named by Government; their shops are called *Bureaux* or *Débîts de Tabac*. No one can sell tobacco throughout France save these licensed dealers.

They are in reality the agents of the Régie. Their number is limited according to the wants of the locality. They apply to the entreposeur of their arrondissement for their supplies, and they must take good heed to have always a sufficient stock on hand. La Régie does not permit that her votaries should ever be disappointed when they apply for the weed she so profusely deals forth.

When the retailer requires fresh supplies, he has printed papers at hand.

He puts down each article he wants, with the weight required, and adds its fixed price; in point of fact he draws up his own invoice. The grand total being added up, he puts the sum required into his pocket, hies away to the chief town of the arrondissement, presents his list to the entreposeur, and at once puts down the hard cash. No credit is allowed. Having taken possession of his goods he returns home, being now liable for all loss or breakage. In certain cases the Régie takes into consideration accidents and casualties that the retailer has no command over—and receives back the damaged goods.

The retailer is remunerated by a commission or

discount. The larger his sales, the better he gets on in the world. This percentage varies according to the different qualities sold. On caporal, extra caporal and Maryland smoking tobacco, five pence a pound is allowed. It is the same on snuff. On Havanna and Manilla cigars, the average lies between 2s. 6d. and 3s. a pound. On French-made cigars 1s. 6d. to 6d., and on cigarettes the percentage is most variable.

These licensed dealers in tobacco have likewise a monopoly for the sale of gunpowder (another Government manufacture), of stamped paper, matches, and post-office stamps. They are at liberty to add any other retail business to the Régie.

A very long chapter could be written on the intrigues, corruption, and all manner of dirtiness, put in motion by the giving and the obtaining of these retail tobacco licences. Some of the Bureaux, especially those situate in Paris and other large cities, are of real value. In the remote outlying localities they don't afford a living. A few years ago the then Imperial rulers of the State kept the patronage of the most lucrative bureaux at their sole disposal. It is supposed that the licences are given to old servants of the State, maimed officers, and very often to their widows in straitened circumstances. But too often the choice bites are allotted to folks who have no real

want or right to them ; and as the patentee is not obliged to attend at the counter *in propria persona*, and can put it in charge of a paid agent, the public is not informed of the name of the court lady or gentleman who is a licensed tobacconist, and much dirty electoral work is concocted in the Prefectures. This is the same under all governments.

Some years ago an attempt at reform was made. The petitioner must now begin his tedious work by drawing up on stamped paper a statement of his or her case, and his or her supposed right to a licence. This must be addressed to the Finance Minister.

An official examination of the case is then ordered. The new regulations forbid all licences to be given to people who are found to enjoy an income exceeding £50 a year.

When the inquiry is completed a report is drawn up and is submitted to a special commission composed of members of the Council of State and of the High Court of Exchequer, always having a Senator for its president. This commission decides whether the licence is or is not to be accorded.

If the decision is favourable, the fortunate suitor has the satisfaction that his or her name is duly inscribed at the tail of an official list already filled with some three to four thousand expectants-elect, to wait and hope.



In spite of all these difficulties enormous intrigue and the use of every kind of patronage is called into play. It is impossible to give an accurate figure as to the number of these retailers.

In the year 1884 the Régie Nationale delivered £14,524,163 to its *Débts* or retail shops, and the retailers received from the public a sum of £15,935,159, thus leaving them a profit of £1,410,996; out of this they have to pay rent and all other expenses.

The total number of licensed planters in the twenty-two favoured departments is given as 43,000 individuals, and the total ground allowed to be cultivated is 21,100 acres. It is further to be observed that the Régie by ministerial edict determines at the opening of each year the weight of leaf that each of the twenty-two departments is to furnish, this being decided by the wants of the Régie, and thus crippling the production. The whole licensed acreage is not therefore under constant production. It is to be remarked that the culture of tobacco in France is mostly carried on by the small landowners or *Petits Propriétaires*, the Régie granting licences for even very limited crops, many not exceeding 1,000 to 1,200 plants. This nearly falls into the province of kitchen gardening.

I have of late heard much talk of certain cows

which in a future time of bliss are to reign paramount over some three acres. I surmise the value of the boon would be greatly increased if their cowships could bring a tobacco licence as their marriage portion.

If the allotment system takes good root, tobacco culture might become a source of ease and comfort to the labouring classes.

It is estimated that since the origin of the present Régie Nationale in France—say in 1811, up to this date of 1886, the very large sum of £280,000,000 sterling has gone into the pockets of the French home growers instead of having been paid for leaf imported from foreign shores. The money has remained in France.

In France the planter has only one purchaser, the all-powerful Régie; in England the planter would have an open market.

To put before the reader the constant progress of the cultivation I will take four years, namely, 1815, 1830, 1881, 1883.

	Weight of Tobacco Grown. lbs. Avoirdupois.		Value paid to Planter.
1815 . .	8,383,848	. .	£120,712
1830 . .	22,874,139	. .	283,480
1881 . .	34,644,640	. .	549,495
1883 . .	41,036,322	. .	621,337

The Régie Nationale is also a large purchaser of foreign leaf and high-class cigars. In 1883 the imports of these articles into France amounted to £1,380,000.

I will now add a few figures showing the progress and actual magnitude of the Régie's operations.

In the troubled year of 1815 the money value received from the sale of tobacco amounted to £2,154,914. But I have found it impossible to arrive at the cost of the manufacture.

In 1830 the total sum received from the sales to the retailers amounted to . . . . .	£2,691,624
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From this figure we have to deduct the sums paid for home-grown or foreign leaf, &c., &c. . . . .	£587,120
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Also the manufacturing expenses, salaries, carriage, repairs, and all other disbursements . . . . .	314,835	
	<hr/>	901,955

Net profit remitted to the Treasury in 1830 . . .		<hr/>
	£1,789,669	<hr/>

It was in 1830 that the use of tobacco took

rapid extension in France, and we thus find for the year 1882—

Gross amount of sales to retailers . . . . .	£14,569,790
Cost of raw material, cigars, &c. . . . .	£1,940,185
Manufacturing expenses	961,961
	————— 2,902, 146
Net profit remitted to the Treasury in 1882 . .	————— £11,667,644
	—————

In these figures no account is taken of the large stocks existing in the warehouses and manufactories; the purchases of raw material varying according to the state of the crops and the market prices.

It is officially stated that in 1885 the sum made over to the Treasury amounted to more than £13,000,000.

In Great Britain I am told that with a population of 35,000,000 the annual revenue collected by the Customs amounts to about £8,500,000. I am not informed if the expense of collecting the duties is deducted from this figure.

In France, with a population of 37,500,000, the Treasury received from the Régie in 1882 £11,663,650, and, as I have said, this revenue is



on the increase; I cannot say the same for the population.

The capital absorbed by the Régie Nationale to carry on its enormous transactions is stated to be as follows:—

Value of land, buildings, machinery, and plant of every description . . . . .	£1,650,000
Stock on hand of raw and manufactured tobaccos . . . . .	3,440,000
	<hr/>
	£5,090,000
	<hr/>

I will add a few figures to give an idea of the price the French consumer pays for his tobacco.

The ordinary Régie smoking caporal, most universally used throughout the country, costs 5s. a pound.

The superior caporal and Maryland is sold at 6s.

The Régie, however, sells its *tabac de Cantine* for the use of the army, navy, and gendarmerie at the low figure of 7½*d.* a pound, and the price paid by Government hospitals, lunatic and other State asylums, is 1s. 9*d.* a pound.

The highest price Havanna cigar dealt out by the Régie to the retail bureaux costs 6*d.*, and from this price you descend step by step till you reach the obnoxious halfpenny article. There are fourteen classes to choose from.

In Paris, Marseilles, and other large cities, the Régie has opened special bureaux under its own officials, where all high-class foreign brands may be had.

Evidently smuggling exists. France has dangerous neighbours in Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, &c. &c. But it is supposed that no great mass of smoking stuff gets across the frontier. The Custom House officers are stimulated by the heavy bounties they receive on all tobacco captured. The said captures are turned over to the Régie, and amount to about £12,000 annually. This contraband trade is principally in cigars and cigarettes.

## CHAPTER III.

### TOBACCO CULTIVATION IN FRANCE.

AFTER the above desultory remarks and historical gleanings, it is high time that I should proceed with the main object I had in view when I took up my pen, namely, to lay before my readers a description or detailed account of how tobacco culture is carried on in France. I have already described the trammels that environ the French tobacco farmer.

The French Government allows this culture to be carried on in only twenty-two departments out of the eighty-six that constitute the territory of the republic.

In reality, the production is limited to the wants of the Régie, the sole purchaser and manufacturer.

Amongst the said twenty-two favoured departments, that of the *Lot et Garonne* is the one of which I have the most personal knowledge, and from which I have obtained the most trustworthy information.

The principal centre of tobacco farming in this district lies around the town of Tonneins, where there is one of the nineteen immense tobacco manufactories that the Régie has established. Tonneins is a town of some 7,000 souls, and is situated on the bank of the Garonne, a few miles from where the river Lot falls into the mightier stream.

In olden times Tonneins was renowned for its snuffs. But in these days, tobacco having shown a decided tendency to creep down from the human nose towards the human mouth, the culture has been changed, and a new plant has been substituted, and now Tonneins grows principally the tobacco-leaf required for the manufactory of the staple pipe-tobacco, well known as "caporal," and which is also made into the rather unsavoury halfpenny cigars, vulgarly surnamed *Soultados*.

There are two distinct species of tobacco plant. The one flammiferous that must be employed for the smoker's article; the other is inflammiferous, and is only used for snuff-making. When a wretched smoker falls athwart a halfpenny cigar into which leaves of the latter kind have found their way, he well knows the torture he is put to.

The selection of soil is an object of primary importance, and it is only after strict examination that the Régie grants the necessary licence.

The most favourable soils around Tonneins are the sandy alluvial deposits of the rivers Garonne and Lot. Light *Boulbine* is the name given them in the district; Alumino-Siliceous (Silicaceous) deposits is the scientific term.

On such soils are raised the large thin silky leaves that contain but small quantities of nicotine or gum. It is most essential that the soil should contain potash salts that are necessary for ensuring the inflammatory properties of the leaf. If such salts are not in natural existence, they must be added artificially.

On chalky loam soils excellent crops may be raised for snuff-making, but the leaves are hopelessly fireproof.

I beg to call my reader's attention to this most essential point in tobacco culture; the primary necessity of producing a leaf that not only can burn, but will burn in a regular fashion. On this depends the value of the leaf.

I believe that in England good light loam and sandy soils may be found, that after proper treatment might become good tobacco fields. In England the farmer would have his free choice and option in selecting the plant best suited to his soil. In France this liberty does not exist.

When, after long and tedious investigation, which may be mitigated by strong patronage and a proper show of high republican principles, the



farmer or landholder at length obtains the coveted licence, and the stipulated area has been staked out by the Excise surveyor (the field or fields must have a rectangular form), for the first year a crop of wheat is put into the ground. In our southern clime harvesting is over by the end of July. The wheat off the ground, a light ploughing takes place. In many cases the harrow is merely run over the stubble, and as soon as possible a crop of *Trifolium incarnatum* is sown broadcast; usually twenty pounds weight of seed is employed per acre.

This *Trifolium*, or scarlet clover, is greatly cultivated in the southern French provinces. Coming on very early in the spring, with its long juicy stalks, standing at least eighteen inches high, it forms a most valuable fodder for cattle. I believe it is gradually working its way northward.

Our countryfolk call it *Farouch*; the word has a strange Saracenic sound. The plant was probably introduced into Spain by the Moors, and from thence it has crossed the Pyrenees and spread over the plains of Gascony. I will further add, that it is customary in these parts to cut the *Farouch* as soon as it is covered with its splendid scarlet flowers in early April, and to put the horses through a course of it for about a fortnight, all dry fodder and oats being suppressed, as well as all hard work.

I now return to the land that is being prepared

for a tobacco crop. As soon as the Farouch is in flower it is cut down and ploughed deep into the soil with a good dressing of well-decayed farm-yard manure. A careful harrowing now follows, and all lumps and clogs are broken up or removed, and till the first day of June the land is left untouched to allow the green stuff to decay

Our tobacco planters lay great stress on this copious vegetable manuring; and before going further it may be well to remark that a regular rotation of one year wheat and one year tobacco is the adopted system. In fact, the soil becomes a rich mould similar to a well-worked kitchen garden.

In the beginning of June about four hundred-weight of pulverised rape oil-cake is carefully spread over each acre. The harrow is run over the surface, and then the land is ploughed up into rounded ridges, spaced out according to the number of plants intended to be put in.

Again, all lumps and clods must be well broken up under the harrow, and by means of the hand-rake the ground must be made as clean and smooth as a lady's flower-bed or a Chinese tea-garden.

The land being now ready to be planted out, we must turn our attention to the nursery beds of young plants.

The French planter is not permitted to choose or

to sow the seed that would ensure him the most profitable crop. At the opening of the year he has to apply to the officers of the Régie for the seed he is bound to put into his ground; and the exact quantity required is doled out to him; the Régie choosing the seed, according to the wants of their manufactories. It is strictly prohibited to allow tobacco plants to run up to flower or to seed. This must at once be put a stop to.

It is in the early days of March that the nursery beds are got ready for sowing. In the country from whence I am writing, these beds are mostly laid out in the open field, a well-sheltered though airy locality being chosen, surrounded by a wire net fence, at once to keep off all farmyard invaders and yet to allow a free circulation of air, so as to drive off the pernicious cold of early dawn produced by the night damps.

The beds are usually three feet wide. Their length is according to the amount of seed to be sown.

These beds are raised some eight inches above the surrounding paths or gangways, and are formed of rich garden mould, well manured with decayed vegetable matter.

Before sowing, the soil is lightly flattened down and a layer of fine river sand, about three-quarters of an inch thick, is spread over it. Another flattening takes place, and then the seed, which

is extremely minute, is sprinkled over the ground with the greatest care, so as to ensure a regular distribution. A sieve full of fine sand is then shaken over the beds, a fresh, light flattening or rolling ensues, and the whole is crowned with a slight coating of what is here called *Marc de raisin*, which being translated, we find to be the grape dregs, or refuse, left after the wine has been drawn off. The farmer always puts in store a small stock, taken from the last year's vintage, and when dry, it becomes a rich black powder, or *humus*. A plentiful sprinkling of water from a fine-rose watering-pot finishes the operation.

A plentiful provision of rye-straw mats are kept near at hand, and at the slightest indication of frost the beds must be protected during the night. If the weather turns out at all dry, frequent use must be made of the fine-rose watering-pot.

This watering must be kept up till the month of June, when the young seedlings will have thrown out leaves of about half an inch wide. Then the whole border should be carefully sprinkled or dusted over with fine pulverised rape oil-cake, watering being used, so as to drive the powder into the soil and thence to the roots.

The two deadly enemies to tobacco seedlings now make their appearance, and incessant warfare must be waged against them. The first and least



dangerous is a small species of ground worm. This is got rid of by a plentiful use of tobacco juice, and as the farmer is not allowed to do his own brewing, Dame Régie provides him with the liquid, at the rate of twopence a quart. The most serious enemy is the slug. Those of a larger growth are easily picked off, but there is a minute slug that gives a vast deal of trouble, but it is so pernicious that at all cost it must be destroyed.

To hunt down and destroy these small vermin the farmer turns out his whole household before daybreak. Lanterns light up the beds, and all the busy fingers are employed in picking off the leaves the devouring plague, till the sun appears, and then the vermin disappear in unknown nooks and crannies.

As I have made allusion to the farmer's household, I will here state that of late years the large landholders have abandoned tobacco culture. They pretend that it did not answer when paid labour had to be employed. It is now principally in the hands of that most numerous class in France—the small proprietors, possessing holdings of from ten to fifty acres. I might say that many do not cover five acres. The peasant proprietors rarely live on their demesne, but congregate in villages or small towns. It is also worthy of remark that peasant landholders rarely have their property in one holding. Their property is scattered about.



The extremely thrifty and wideawake French peasant is always hoarding up and looking out for small choice bits of land, so constantly coming into the market by the action of the French law of succession, by which a father's property on his death must be equally divided amongst his children. Thus if a man leaves five acres and five children, be they boys or girls, each has one acre. Sometimes one of the heirs buys the others out. If not, the small lots come into the open market.

Now, as I have said, the whole of the farmer's household turns out; this is exact, because the small landholder cultivates the whole of his property by means of his family. Children as soon as they can toddle are put to geese- and swine-keeping. You frequently see small boys, barely five years old, armed with the long-pointed goad, calmly driving down a couple of huge oxen to water. This is one great cause of the impossibility which exists in our agricultural districts of enforcing obligatory schooling.

The blood-tax, or military conscription, yearly sweeps off the cream of the young peasants, and their places at the plough have to be taken by mere youngsters of fifteen to sixteen years old; and in their turn the wee boys and girls are as soon as possible made use of.

Returning to tobacco, I may state that the small

landholder rarely cultivates above a hectare (two and a half acres) in tobacco. On this hectare he raises 10,000 plants of the species called in the Lot and Garonne, *Auric*; or 30,000 of the species called *Paraguay*.

The great operation of planting out the seedlings ought to take place not later than the 15th of June. The reason for this is simple. To ensure a good, prime, saleable article, the tobacco plants ought to be garnered in between the 10th and 20th, at latest, of September; the leaves being sufficiently matured before fogs and cold damp nights have set in. A later gathering may only give leaves that will remain green, and have lost their aroma. It is seen by these dates that the plant must have reached its full maturity in about *three months' growth*. So no time has to be lost or frittered away.

Thus on the 15th of June, the land to be planted out being in good condition, and the seedlings sufficiently strong, every member of the family, men, women, boys and girls, are set to work, each having his or her proper task allotted.

The operation is never begun before five o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun is low on the horizon. The mother of the family generally undertakes the drawing out of the precious young plants, and the filling of the planter's baskets. A drill line is stretched, not along the ridges but at

an accurate right-angle with the said ridges ; this must be carefully done, with true geometrical precision, as if a chessboard was being laid out, thus ensuring the easy and accurate counting out of the plants.

Four planters, each armed with his or her wooden prog, are divided along the line ; each planter having his basket child at his back. A man, and I may remark that it is always a man, follows along the line with his watering-pot, giving each seedling, as it is carefully pricked in, about a tumblerful of water.

The first line planted out, the drill line is brought back three feet, or more correctly speaking, as we are at Tonneins, one French metre (this distance depends on the species of plant), and as rapidly as possible the work is pushed on till nightfall. When a hectare has to be planted with Auric, 10,000 seedlings have to be put in. This is the figure when the Régie has given orders that the species of tobacco here called Auric is to be cultivated. If the Régie requires the smaller species, called Paraguay, instead of 10,000 per hectare, 30,000 plants are allowed. The Auric is principally employed in the Lot and Garonne. I have not been able to trace with any exactitude from whence it derives its name. I did suppose that it was the original *Nicotiana auriculata*, the first imported into Europe, but I learn from good authority

that it merely takes its name from the village of Auric, situated to the north of Tonneins.

The whole plot being planted, a fortnight is required for the young plants to get round and take good root. During this period the drills must be constantly visited, and all feeble subjects removed and replaced. Ten days later new leaves will have been thrown out, and all those next the soil must be pinched off and destroyed.

As time rolls on the plants run rapidly up, flower-buds appear, soon to burst forth into the splendid purple clustering flower spikes. These must be remorselessly cut down; no one is allowed to gather tobacco seed. This floral execution duly performed, all the leaves save the exact number permitted per plant and ordained by the Régie must be removed and destroyed. The number of permitted leaves is variable, and decided annually by the officials. Some years six leaves are allowed, in others eight, and even ten are permitted.

As Dame Nature persists in spite of the Régie, and its Draconian edicts, in asserting her free will, as soon as the plant has been despoiled of its floral ornament fresh buds or young leaves shoot out at each juncture of the Régie's favourites and the main stalk. These intruders must be constantly removed and carefully destroyed. Girls with their thumb and finger nails suffice for this work. During July, the ground around the plants must be broken



up and well worked. This is done by means of a light plough drawn by a pair of oxen, or oftener of cows yoked wide enough apart to put abreast in separate furrows, the ridge with its plants being in the middle. The ground is thus broken up on each side of the plants; girls and boys follow with hoe and rake to gather the soil well around the roots, break up the clods and carefully rake the beds. During the time that all this has been going on the officers of the Régie have made frequent visits. They have seen flowers and extra leaves destroyed before them. Each ridge has been counted over, and where defaulters have been found a tall reed or bullrush marks their absence. Now, as each ridge in a hectare contains say for the Auric species 100 plants and that the square hectare is divided into 100 ridges, the sum total of 10,000 plants is soon verified. The officers take good note of the absentees, and deduct them from the total. If a ridge has been over-planted the intruders are pulled up and destroyed.

The exact number of plants being known, and the exact number of leaves on each plant being likewise known, fraud is in reality almost impossible, especially when the mode adopted for the delivery of the crops, with which the reader will become acquainted later on, is taken into account.

No doubt the Excise or Régie officers have rather vexatious rights of search into all dwellings,



out-houses, barns and other tenements occupied by the tobacco grower. These powers are rarely made use of. Our wary Gascon peasant is far too wide awake to run the risk of the loss of his licence, joined to a ruinous fine, for the sake of pilfering a few pounds of bad unsaleable tobacco. I say unsaleable, because the peasant would first have much difficulty in obtaining in secret good dried leaf, and then, to convert this into smoking tobacco, the process of fermentation is only to be properly got through by operating on large quantities. In the French Government manufactories the masses operated on to obtain the well known "caporal" are of enormous bulk, and are watched night and day by well-tried and competent overseers under the eye of first-rate chemists.

Mid September is now drawing nigh. The splendid luxuriant green of the tobacco plants is gradually waning away to be replaced by a light brown russet colour, speckled with yellow stripes. It is high time for proceeding with the gathering in of the crop. But as all the plants have not kept the same pace, only those that are judged ripe must be cut. The tool employed is the *Secateur* or small spring shears, such as we use for vine pruning. The work of cutting down is never begun before three o'clock in the afternoon. The plants are left where they fall, they fade rapidly, and losing their stiffness become supple and pliant. Between six and seven o'clock the cart is brought on to the

plantation to be at once loaded. The plants are carefully laid flat in the cart like large lettuces. Careful handling is most essential in this as in all subsequent operations. All damaged leaves are lost for sale. As soon as the drying house is reached, the plants must be unloaded without loss of time. A couple of hours' delay, and fermentation would set in and damage the whole lot.

As they are unloaded the plants are placed upright, or slightly slanting, against the inner walls of the drying house, the leaves all pointing upwards. Precocious fermentation is still to be dreaded. To avoid this, as soon as possible the plants are tied together in pairs by the large ends of their stalks. Willow twigs, or osiers, are employed for this (Russian bags would appear more suitable), and as quickly as the coupling is performed the couples are carried on to the drying floors, and hung astraddle on long stringers or drying rods, cut out of Norway deal.

A brief description of the usual drying house must here find its place. In the Lot and Garonne these buildings are always located in a good open, well-exposed situation. The usual dimensions adopted are: length, 50 feet; breadth, 25 feet; height, 30 to 35 feet. Such a building can receive 10,000 plants or 5,000 couplings. The walls are of good stone and mortar masonry. There is always a good tiled roof. Over the

ground floor is one boarded story. Good glazed windows, with thick outside shutters, must be placed on the four sides of the house. This is to ensure light and ventilation. Cross beams traverse at equal distances the two floors; on these are laid the rods, or stringers. These rods are always cut out of straight grained Norway deal. Knots are to be avoided. The moisture from the leaves rapidly decaying the wood, the rods are steeped and thoroughly soaked in a solution of sulphate of copper. No other kinds of wood are deemed serviceable; they might stain the leaves. Iron is not to be thought of, because of the rust. I should think that well-galvanized iron rods might be employed. The deal stringers require frequent change, and have to be carefully looked to. Woe betide the unfortunate when a rod load of fresh leaves comes crashing down on his shoulders!

A man stands on a rolling stage, from which he places astraddle, with ease and nicety the yoked couples with their leaves hanging down on the rods. The couples must be kept apart one from the other.

The process of desiccation is one of the utmost importance. Habit and long practice are the only guides.

If an excess of light or warmth is admitted the leaves are dried, but remain with a strong green

colour, whilst damp and darkness turn them black. These mishaps are solely to be avoided by a nice handling of the glazed windows and outside shutters. The proper management of this part of the business is a real talent only acquired from long practice.

No stoves, kiln, warmth, or fire are employed.

In the month of November, or in the beginning of December, the leaves are dry and ripe, and the time has arrived when stripping the leaves from their stalks is to be proceeded with. The state of the weather has to be consulted. If frosty, the leaves are crisp and brittle; if the days are rainy, foggy, in fact, damp, then the leaves are flabby and in a state of sop. As soon as a bright sunny day shows its face, all the household is set to work, and as the stripping must be done offhand, they stick day and night to their task, usually performed on the upper floor. The olden rustic four-beaked oil-lamp lights the weary night-workers at their toil.

The three or four leaves of the upper ring are laid on one heap; those of the lower ring on another heap. These must be kept quite separate; all the points of the leaves being turned the same way. Though the work is to be speedily done, again great care is taken so as to avoid breaking or damaging the precious leaves.

The two heaps are now piled in two separate



rectangular heaps, called in Gascony "*marcs*." These marcs are kept about two feet high. The leaves must be lightly laid on; each course crossing the lower one, all the points turned the same way. There must be no crushing. Straw is then strewn over the marcs; then all the good-wife's woollen blankets are spread over the straw, and the whole edifice is topped off with the linen bed-sheets. All these precautions are thought necessary so as to ensure the flexibility and pliability of the tobacco leaves.

Fermentation, the always dreaded foe, is to be guarded against. The planter has frequently to visit his marcs, and by thrusting his arm into the heaps detect by the growing warmth whether fermentation is setting in. If this occurs the marc must be instantly pulled down.

The last and the most scientific operation has now to be proceeded with. This is the sorting, or "*triage*." It is divided into two processes.

The first, which is merely manual, consists in classing out the leaves according to their respective lengths, each marc being operated upon separately. For this sorting all hands are again employed, and the work is carried on till late at night. The leaves are divided into three classes: longs, middlings, and shorts.

The six parcels carefully kept apart have now to pass under the inspection of the "*trieur*," or



expert. This sorting is of a most delicate kind, and requires a knowledge or talent only acquired by long practice. Generally it is undertaken by the paterfamilias. The work can only be carried on with broad daylight, so as to avoid all optical errors as to colour.

As the different lots are brought before him he examines each leaf, and according to its colour and quality separates them into six distinct classes: extras, very good, good, passable, torn, perforated.

This rather tedious operation finished, the twelve sorts are then made up into sheaves of nineteen leaves each, the twentieth leaf being used to bind the sheaf together. These sheaves are called "*manoques*."

No error must be committed. The Régie is inexorably severe. A fine is imposed for a first offence; for a second one your licence is withdrawn. When the *manoques* are made up, they are covered with straw and blankets, and await the Régie's order for their delivery. A previous fortnight's notice is always given of the appointed day.

Three or four days before the delivery the *manoques* are uncovered, and the different qualities or classes are made up into separate bales, built up on thin deal planks and bound together with the "*endortos*," or willow or clematis stringers.

Each bale must be numbered, and a ticket attached bearing the number of twenty-leaf *maniques* it contains.

When the planter and his cargo arrive at the warehouse of the Régie, his bales are first overhauled by an officer to see if the declared number of *maniques* is correct. I have already stated what would ensue if an error is discovered.

In former pages it has been shown that the exact number of leaves that the planter is bound to produce to the Régie is down against his name in black and white.

So the total of the twenty-leaf *maniques* must tally with this figure. Every leaf, good, bad, or indifferent, torn or soiled, must make its personal appearance.

This first ordeal being passed, the bales are placed on a long table, having at its head an *areopagus*, formed of two officers of the Régie and three planters chosen by lot. This jury divides the leaves into three classes; all tobacco not finding its place in one of the three classes is considered *lost*, and is at once burned. This appears to have been changed, and a fourth class is now admitted.

The planter's account is at once made up, and, cheque in hand, he turns into the cashier's office and takes his money.

When a Tonneins planter receives £18 to £20

an acre he is perfectly content. From out of this sum he has to pay all his expenses, labour, seed, and taxes.

It has proved almost impossible to obtain accurate information as to the cost of cultivation, the entire cultivation in the Lot and Garonne being in the hands of a host of small landholders (it is said they number at least 5,000), who, as I have said, turn to and do the work themselves aided by their families.

They rarely cultivate two acres, many mere garden plots, the work being in great part done by women, girls, and boys.

In tobacco growing, as in all kinds of farming, the produce varies with the goodness of the soil and the care taken in preparing it, and there is here, as there is in all countries, careful farming and careless farming.

The latest figures that I have been able to procure from official sources on tobacco culture in the department of the Lot and Garonne furnish the following results:—

Number of acres licensed by the	
Régie for tobacco culture . . . .	8,028
Weight of leaf in pounds avoir-	
dupois delivered to the Régie. . .	5,680,544
Sum total in pounds sterling paid	
by the Régie to the planters . . .	94,829

It is to be taken into consideration that no

information is afforded as to whether the whole of the licensed 8,000 acres was cropped.

Again, the principal portion of the tobacco brought to the Régie was of the quality called Auric, of which only 10,000 plants are allowed per hectare (two and a-half acres).

It is well to take note, that of the 8,028 acres, 1,580 acres were planted with the Paraguay plant, with 30,000 plants to the hectare. From these acres 1,916,900 pounds weight were raised, and the sum paid for this lot was £32,400 sterling.

The prices paid varied from 3*d.* to 7*d.* per pound.

Tobacco leaf similar to that employed by the Régie for the manufacture of "caporal" is sold in bond in Great Britain for from 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.* to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* a pound.

If ever this culture was permitted in the British Isles the Briton would have certain advantages over the French grower. He would be at liberty to choose the plant best suited to his soil, and raise larger crops than the French Régie allows. One thing advisable to be done would be to raise the seedlings under glass, so as to be able to prick them out in the field as soon as possible in the spring, thus to get the leaves mellow by the end of August.

I will again lay strong stress on my previous



remarks, that well-prepared soils and most careful husbandry are essential for success.

I do not suppose that it would be necessary that the British planter should adopt the Tonneins system of rotation, or the ploughing in of the Farouch. Probably the British farmer would prefer preparing a sufficient lot of vegetable compost to spread over his tobacco land, thus ensuring an annual crop. I will also offer the remark that tobacco being only planted out in May or June, and being off the ground early in September, could not the farmer raise in the interval some light and not too exhausting crop?

In drawing up this description of tobacco culture in the south of France, I have had great help from my esteemed friend, Mr. Lasserre, vice-president of the "*Société Agricole*" of the Lot and Garonne, for many years himself a large tobacco planter.

The same system of culture is in practice in the adjacent departments of the Dordogne and Lot, these being with the Lot and Garonne the largest tobacco departments in France.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have already stated that it has been impossible to obtain exact information as to the real acreage on which tobacco leaf is raised in our southern departments. The absence of such information has not allowed me to give any precise figures as to the results obtained per acre in these localities.

I have now received most reliable data as to what has taken place in Northern France, namely, in the highly cultivated department Du Nord, and as this department lies in close



proximity to our English shores, I believe it desirable to lay this information before my readers.

This part of France would be of easy access to any future English tobacco planter. The central city is Lille, and the chief seaport Dunkirk.

In the year 1884, I am informed that 745 licensed planters cultivated, in this said department, 1,252 acres in tobacco plant, and that they delivered to the Administration de la Régie 2,843,953 pounds weight of cured leaf, for which they received £44,931 sterling.

Thus according to these figures each acre yielded, on an average, 2,270 pounds weight of leaf, and brought into the planter's pocket about £35 sterling.

The price paid by the Régie in 1884 averaged about  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  per pound.

The best time for a visit to the tobacco fields would be at the end of July or in August.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CRUDE SUGGESTIONS AS TO TOBACCO CULTURE IN GREAT BRITAIN.

WHILE I have been occupied in putting together the preceding notes on tobacco culture in France, my thoughts have very naturally strayed towards the possibility of finding some *modus operandi* that might render practicable the introduction of the same culture into Great Britain.

The primary and dominant condition to be observed in attempting to form any such scheme must be that in no possible way the present revenue raised upon tobacco would be diminished or be put in any kind of peril.

It is useless, and would be absurd to dream of introducing the French system of "La Régie" into the British Isles. Not only would such an attempted change be detrimental to a vast number of private interests, in spite of all attempts at indemnification, but according to my idea it would throw a much too great amount of patronage into the hands of our rulers.

I will now, with all due modesty, make public

the results of my meditations and cogitations on the subject, in their very crude and rough garb. If ever the question is taken into serious consideration, wiser heads than mine may perchance pick some hints from out of my present proposal.

It must be laid down and admitted as a fact, that all soils and exposures are not suitable for profitable tobacco growing. It would be useless to attempt to cultivate an inferior article.

I must now be allowed to suppose that by some strange chance, brought about perhaps by the increasing agricultural depression, the powers of the day became inclined to cast a benignant eye towards tobacco. We must even go so far as to suppose the thing adopted by a parliamentary vote.

This chimera being admitted, the next step my reader must induce his imagination to take is to picture to his mind's eye some intelligent striving farmer or landholder who, having by himself or by the help of competent judges arrived at the conviction that the district in which he is located is suitable for tobacco planting, would call around him the large and small landowners, farmers, and tenants living in a radius of, let us say, five or six miles. Our intelligent friend would expound the idea to his neighbours, and if they proved agreeable, a committee would be named that would have at once to ascertain the number of persons likely to become planters, and more

especially the number of acres suited for conversion into tobacco fields.

It would be necessary to find in the adjacent districts adherents representing a figure of at least 3,000 to 4,000 acres. The reason for this is simply that things being so far advanced, Government could be applied to, not only to grant the necessary licences, but likewise to establish in the locality a central district bonding warehouse.

Now these district bonding warehouses are the pivot on which all my proposal turns.

These district bonding houses would have to be located in a central position, and as near as possible to a railroad station. Their size and capacity would be a subject for calculation. They could be three or four stories high, fireproof, &c.

Around the house a good wide gangway ought to be left, the whole surrounded by an outer wall some ten to twelve feet high. In front would be a courtyard of sufficient size to admit carts or waggons. In this courtyard should be placed the offices and dwelling-house of the Excise superintendent. Accommodation would most likely be necessary for two or three subaltern officers.

It is extremely premature to enter into any detail as to the laying out of the warehouse and courtyard, or to attempt specifying about windows, shutters, iron bars, and hoisting tackle.

Neither can I settle where the money is to come

from to pay for the building of the warehouse. I can merely hint that in France private individuals often engage to build for Government, post-offices, gendarmerie stations, and the like on settled plans, the Government agreeing to a long lease.

The planters, who would have to deposit their dry leaf in the warehouse, might be called upon to pay a moderate storage rent.

Whilst our phantom edifice is building the Excise head agent and his men would have full occupation in staking out the licensed plots. These must be of a rectangular shape, and their exact acreage would have to be entered or booked in a ledger, opened, not only to note the acreage but the exact number of plants the grower intended to put in the soil. All observations on accidents, loss of plants, and general casualties would therein find their place.

I leave for future discussion the question of whether the French Régie's rule of specifying the number of leaves to be left on each plant would be adopted. I may remark that the green leaves are of no use; it is only after they are ripe and cured that they become of value. It has been seen what a delicate operation the drying is, and I much doubt the possibility of carrying it out to any extent on the sly, especially as the Excise officers would have the right of search in all dwellings or tenements belonging to the planters.



The plots staked out, the planter would at once be able to set to work to prepare the ground for his first crop.

From May to December the Excise agents would be employed in visiting and inspecting the growing crops in their district.

They would verify if the stipulated number of plants had been adhered to, and would at once remove all invaders.

They would note down the number of plants having failed.

The crop being gathered and dried, the planter would have to inform the Excise agent that he was ready to deliver his goods into the bonding warehouse.

The agent would fix the day for the delivery, thus to prevent confusion and crowding.

The leaf would have to be delivered in packages, so made up that their interior could be examined, thus to avoid all possibility of attempted fraud by the introduction of extraneous matter.

The whole crop, good, bad, and indifferent, must be brought to the warehouse. There alone would it be destroyed if its destruction was asked for.

The leaf weighed, the result would be entered on the same ledger already containing the acreage and number of plants.

In a short time the practised eye of the Excise officer would at once detect any serious discrepancy.

Supposing that all was right, the leaf would be lodged in bond, there to await the purchasers.

The warehouse would be open at stated hours to the said purchasers, who could make their choice but take no samples. It might be arranged that stated sale days should be fixed, when sellers and buyers might meet.

A parcel being sold, the seller would give his purchaser an order or warrant, on presenting which the weight specified would be delivered, but before the tobacco could quit the yard the duty would have to be paid. I look upon it as most essential that the duty should be paid by the buyer and never by the grower. It would be very wrong to oblige the man who only would receive *3d.* or *5d.* a pound to advance *6s.* to be able to sell the said pound. Rules would have to be laid down so as to allow the tobacco in bond to be removed from the district warehouse to more central stations in certain seaports. This would be necessary in case of exportation. I am not competent to touch upon the question of penalties, but they must be stringent in case of fraud. The planter must feel and know the risks he would run.

Whilst I have been engaged in putting my tobacco notes into some sort of readable form, I have followed, as much as it has been in my power, the progress the subject has made in England.

I read with interest that Sir E. Birkbeck had brought the question before the House of Commons, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's semi-acquiescent answer. Some days later, on March 30, 1886, Lord Harris, in a most masterly speech, introduced the same question in the House of Lords, and the answer received from Lord Sudeley that trials would be permitted was in appearance encouraging. I own I was taken by surprise when I read a report of the sitting on April 7 of the Royal Agricultural Society. It is true that a grant of £100 was made for experiments on tobacco culture; the Honorary Secretary, Mr. Jenkins, after having given accounts as to this culture in Belgium and the Netherlands, expressing doubts as to its being a profitable crop in Great Britain.

The great argument made use of against tobacco is found in the English climate; I will allude to this argument later on.

I will admit that I have seen with deep regret the answer Lord Harris received on April 12 from Lord Sudeley, namely, that the Royal Agricultural Society refused to attempt to carry out the wished for experiments, and the explanations of the Earl of Ravensworth that the Society did not feel justified in thus employing its lands and funds.

I candidly avow that it does seem strange that a Society whose sole efforts at the present most

critical state of agricultural depression in England ought to be directed to the studying of all means of alleviating even to a small extent the existing evil, should not have been tempted to put out a helping hand, and not at once have crushed every effort made to bring forward tobacco culture. With wheat at 30s. or 32s. shillings a quarter, costing the farmer 40s. to raise, and nothing looming in the future to give hopes of a decided amelioration, every possible means of remedy ought to be studied.

I can give no opinion on the results obtained in Belgium and Holland, but I can state that in the two years 1882 and 1883 the French northern departments of Le Nord and Le Pas de Calais produced 12,019,507 pounds weight of tobacco leaf, and that the planters received some £190,000 sterling for their crops. I believe that the said departments are not situated very far from the English coast. It does not appear that tobacco growing is an unprofitable trade in France, when we have seen that from 8,500,000 pounds weight grown in 1815, the figure of 41,000,000 is now attained.

I have before stated that only twenty-two French departments have as yet been favoured with the privilege of growing the plant, and it would be passing strange, if the culture was one of loss, that the sixty departments left out in the cold should



be always striving by means of their Senators and Deputies to obtain admission amongst the favoured few.

Grave doubts are raised and abound upon the question of climate. It is stated to be too cold, too damp, too uncertain in England, to allow of the introduction of the proposed culture. I cannot conceive or allow that there can exist any sensible difference between the climate of the southern counties of England and that of Picardy and Flanders. I do not take notice of Prussia, and even Russia, where tobacco is grown. I believe that the general climate in southern England is more genial than in the countries across the Channel, and I feel confident that in the said southern counties of England and in Ireland, tobacco could be advantageously grown. I recall my former statement, that the plant is only on the ground from June to September; cold winters, early frosts, and November fogs, have nought to do with the question.

I have never supposed that it could be carried on throughout the whole surface of the British Isles, though it appears to have succeeded in Scotland. I opine that in certain districts large quantities could be reaped for home consumption, and larger quantities for exportation.

It would I believe be wrong to take as a basis for forming an opinion the results obtained in



France under the iron rule of the Régie Nationale and those that might be attained by the British planter having his full liberty as to choice of seed and methods of culture.

It is true that in the southern districts of France the culture is left principally in the hands of the small landholders, *Petits Propriétaires*. The reason is principally to be found in the fact that the middle class of landholders are not farmers in the English acceptance of the word. Doing little or nothing for themselves, their expenses are heavy; besides, they dislike the thralldom of the Régie. In England farming is looked upon as a most honourable profession; it is the reverse in France. I believe in the northern provinces the case is different.

It will be evident to all practical men, that the curing or drying operation is the most important and the most difficult part of the culture.

The extent of the crops of the planter must be limited by the space under cover that he can dispose of for these processes. Where large farm-buildings are already in existence, it would be perhaps easy to make sufficient arrangements, and if new buildings were required the curing houses could be made three or four stories high.

The great difficulty will fall to the lot of small growers having but scant accommodation at their disposal. In France this class of planters makes

good use of the attics that exist in all their houses, or, having been long years tobacco growers, have gradually raised their curing houses.

This is a serious drawback, and before a plant is put into the ground provision must be made for its cure.

I am not aware if trials have been made as to the application of artificial warmth.

It would be regretted if exaggerated ideas should be entertained as to the probable amount of profit to be derived from tobacco culture, and it would be very wrong to imagine that its introduction would open a golden field of easy wealth to the now despondent farmer. I believe the culture could become remunerative, but it is useless to dissemble the stern fact that before it could be brought well under way a most serious apprenticeship would have to be gone through.

It is supposed that each acre could produce about £20 sterling of marketable leaf. The question then arises as to what it would cost to raise and cure. The preparation of the soil would be a first outlay. The British farmer can calculate about what tillage, harrowing, manure, rape-seed cake, hoeing, will cost him per acre. The unknown expenses will be the gathering, hanging, curing, stripping, and sorting processes.

It is said that a full grown girl can strip about 500 plants per day. As for the sorting and classi-

fication of the leaf, it will require some time and practice. The farmer or his wife, or his head man, must take the most important part of the business under his own special charge. There exists no reason why it should be hurried through.

I do not attempt to give any approximate figures, leaving it to those desirous of making a trial to calculate what they believe would remain to them out of the said £20 sterling.

I have only attempted to describe the culture of tobacco as it is carried on in the south and centre of France. A serious study of the methods employed in the northern districts of France would be of great use to any future British planter.

MAS D'AZIL (ARIÈGE),

28th April, 1886.















